

R 161412Z MAR 92  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5657  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 02013

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (DELETING SECTION INFORMATION)

E.O. 12356:DECL:OADR

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: EMERGENCE OF BASHIR? - ROLE DEFINING IN THE  
NIF DOMINATED GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN

REF: ADDIS ABABA 01259 (NOTAL)

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: FROM A NUMBER OF CONTACTS WE HAVE HAD LATELY IN KHARTOUM'S EVER ACTIVE POLITICAL CIRCLES, THERE IS PLAUSIBLE, BUT NOT YET CONCLUSIVE, HOPE THAT SUDAN'S PRESIDENT MAY BE TRYING TO WIGGLE OUT SOMEWHAT FROM UNDER THE NIF SHADOW. BASHIR'S CONTINUING WEAKNESS, HOWEVER, IS THAT HIS CORE SUPPORT GROUP, THE ARMY, IS BEING REMOLDED DAY BY DAY BY THE NIF. WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL ASSETS, BASHIR HAS HAD LITTLE TO RECOMMEND HIM BUT HIS UNIFORM. THAT NOW MAY BE DEVALUED. ANY INDEPENDENCE HE NOW MAY SHOW, PERHAPS USING THE NEW TNC, MAY WELL BE TOO LATE TO MATTER MUCH. END SUMMARY.

13. A RECENT CONVERSATION BETWEEN DCM, POL&ECON COUNSELOR AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR FOR CIVILIAN AFFAIRS AHMED ZEIN AL ABDIEN, NEWLY NAMED TO THE TRANSITIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL AND LONG A DUP PARTY STALWART, PARALLELED GENERALLY THE LINE WE HAVE BEEN HEARING FROM OTHERS LATELY THAT BASHIR HAS SOME IDEAS OF HIS OWN AND IS NOT A TOTALLY KEPT MAN. THIS ARGUMENT ALSO SQUARES WITH THE COMMENTS BASHIR IS REPORTED TO HAVE MADE TO TGE PRESIDENT MELES AND PGE CHIEF ISAIAS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO ASMARA. (REFTEL).

14. AL ABDEIN HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR FEW BRIDGES TO BASHIR AS US/SUDAN RELATIONS SOURED AND SANK. HE IS A WESTERN ORIENTED LAWYER, AN OLD TIME POLITICIAN AND WHEELER-DEALER, AND AN ODD MAN IN BASHIR'S ENTOURAGE. WE TAKE HIM FOR A MESSAGE BEARER, AND A MAN TO REPORT HIS SOUNDINGS TO BASHIR. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, HE IS NOT SOME NIF PLANT DOUBLING ON BASHIR BUT HAS HIS OWN AXES TO GRIND.

15. IN THE COURSE OF A LENGTHY CONVERSATION ON THE NEW PSEUDO-PARLIAMENT, THE TNC, AL ABDEIN SAID HE HAD RECEIVED BY DIRECT INTERVENTION WITH BASHIR, A FAIR SLICE OF THE SEATS FOR HIS OWN DUP PARTY CRONIES. HE DESCRIBED THE PROCESS IN TERMS OF POLITICAL WHEELING AND DEALING, ASSURING US THAT, NIF OR NOT, SUDAN STILL HAD PLENTY OF ACTIVE POLITICKING GOING ON.

16. HE ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT THE TNC COULD, NOT WOULD, DEVELOP INTO A POLITICAL MECHANISM OF USE TO BASHIR DESPITE ITS RIGGED NIF MAJORITY OF APPOINTEES. AL ABDEIN WENT TO SOME LENGTH TO PAINT BASHIR AS A MAN BURDENED WITH OFFICE, AN UNSOPHISTICATED BUT GENERALLY HONEST SOLDIER WHO WAS IN OVER HIS HEAD. AL ABDEIN VERY STRONGLY SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE TNC COULD TURN OUT TO BE A BASHIR HORSE TO THE NIF'S TROY. IF PROPERLY USED, THE TNC COULD SERVE TO BUILD POLITICAL POWER BACKING THE PRESIDENT. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT ON THE CHANCES FOR THIS COMING ABOUT.

16. MORE COMMENT: WE DOUBT THAT AN EMERGENCE OF BASHIR VIA THE TNC IS IN THE CARDS. FROM ALL THAT

WE HAVE SEEN OF IT AND ITS ORGANISATION, THE TNC MOST CLOSELY RESEMBLES AN OLD SOVIET STYLE PEOPLES CONGRESS, A PULPIT FOR THE OLIGARCHS TO USE TO RECEIVE PREPARED OVATIONS. BUT AL ABDEIN'S SUGGESTION THAT BASHIR MIGHT WANT TO USE THIS BODY AND HIS REPEATED ASSERTION THAT BASHIR IS NOT JUST A CIPHER, LEAD US TO THINK BASHIR MAY IN FACT HAVE SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT WHERE HIS NIF MENTORS HAVE LED HIM AND HIS COUNTRY.

¶7. EVEN IF TRUE, IT MAY WELL BE TOO LATE. IN ANY EVENT, THE NIF ARE MAKING IT MORE AND MORE CLEAR THAT THEY PLAY ROUGH; ANY ERRANT SHOW OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE TNC IS LIKELY TO GET ITS AUTHOR SMACKED DOWN PROMPTLY. IF BASHIR HOPES TO USE THE TNC TO BUILD HIMSELF A POLITICAL BASE, HE WILL HAVE TO MOVE WITH MORE POLITICAL SAVVY AND ENERGY THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN HIM SO FAR.

CHEEK